

METHODS FOR FORMING AN ASSEMBLY FOR TRANSFER OF A USEFUL LAYER

5 This application claims the benefit of provisional application 60/490,796 filed July 28, 2003, the content of which is expressly incorporated herein by reference thereto.

BACKGROUND ART

10 The present invention generally relates to methods of fabricating substrates for microelectronics, optoelectronics, or optics involving transfer of a useful layer from a first support to a second support.

Various techniques have recently been developed to allow the mechanical transfer of a layer of semiconductor material from a first support to a second support.
15 The layer may or may not have undergone component production treatments before the transfer. For example, one treatment uses buried porous layers that can be attacked chemically and has been described in United States Patent No. 6,100,166. Another method utilizes substrates weakened by implanting gas species to obtain a thin useful layer that can be detached from the remainder of the material by fracture at
20 the implanted zone. Lastly, molecular bonding techniques utilize a controlled bonding energy so that a mechanical force can result in detachment of a layer which has been temporarily bonded to a support.

When a useful layer is connected to a first support using one of the above techniques, transfer of the layer involves bringing a second support into contact with
25 the free face of the useful layer using suitable bonding forces. The free face of the assembly including the useful layer and the first support is known as the "front" face. The transfer is completed by applying stress forces (typically tension and/or bending and/or shear forces) between the useful layer and the first support. One or more tools could be used to detach the useful layer, such as a drawing rig or a blade introduced
30 laterally at the weakened interface to propagate a crack, or a jet of fluid can be applied to the weakened interface (see, for example, International Application Publication No. WO01/04933). When the useful layer has not undergone any component fabrication steps, then the transfer is generally carried out regardless of the bonding technique employed to affix the useful layer to the second support (such as by molecular
35 bonding, eutectic bonding, bonding using a polymer or resin, etc).

However, if the useful layer has already undergone steps in the component fabrication process, then it is often necessary to carry out different types of deposition

treatments (for example, semiconducting or semiconductive oxides or nitrides, polycrystalline semiconductor, amorphous semiconductor, monocrystalline semiconductor formed by homo- or hetero-epitaxy). For example, when a “full wafer” method is carried out in a specific reactor, the deposits have a tendency to partially or completely cover the free face of the useful layer and to overflow onto the side faces of the substrate that include the useful layer and the first support. Such an overflow produces a useful layer that is encapsulated resulting in a strengthening of the bond at the periphery between the useful layer and the first support. This condition can cause problems during the subsequent detachment step required to transfer the useful layer to the second support.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides methods for forming an assembly for transfer of a useful layer that overcomes the drawbacks mentioned above. In particular, the method includes forming a useful layer on a first support having an interface therebetween, and residual material on a portion of the first support to form the assembly, and processing the assembly to attenuate bonding between the useful layer and the first support caused by the residual material.

In an advantageous implementation, the useful layer is weakly bonded to the support to facilitate detachment. In a variation, the interface may be a detachable interface layer provided on the first support before forming the useful layer.

In another advantageous variation, processing of the assembly includes removal of residual material. Generally, at least a portion of the first support in contact with the residual material may be removed. Also, at least a portion of a peripheral zone of material covering an edge of the interface may be removed, with the removal made by at least one of splitting or etching. If desired, the useful layer may be masked before etching.

In another advantageous embodiment, processing of the assembly includes forming at least one cut or separating channel between a free surface of the useful layer and the interface to separate the useful layer from contact with the residual material. A plurality of separating channels may be cut to form a plurality of islets. The separating channel may be cut by using at least one of a saw splitting technique, a laser splitting technique, and an ion beam splitting and masked chemical etching technique.

In yet another variation, processing of the assembly includes forming a peripheral recess in the first support so that the residual material does not contact the

useful layer. The width and depth of the peripheral recess is sufficient to accommodate the volume of residual material resulting from formation of the useful layer.

5 A further aspect of the invention pertains to a support for fabricating substrates or components on substrates which can be treated to receive at least a portion of a useful layer. The treatment results in the formation of a peripheral zone of material. The improvement comprises providing a peripheral recess zone in the support for receiving the residual material to prevent bonding between the residual material and the useful layer.

10 Another advantageous implementation includes a support for fabricating substrates or components which can be treated to receive at least a portion of a useful layer. The treatment results in the formation of a peripheral zone of residual material, and thus a peripheral recessed zone is provided in the support for receiving the residual material to prevent bonding between the residual material and the useful
15 layer.

Another advantageous embodiment of the invention concerns a substrate that includes a support and a useful layer having an interface therebetween. The useful layer is intended to be transferred to a second support by affixing a free surface of the useful layer to the second support and detaching it at the interface. The useful layer
20 forms a peripheral zone of material that can at least partially cover the interface, and the substrate includes at least one separating cut or channel located between a free surface of the useful layer and the interface to separate the useful layer from contact with the peripheral zone of material.

As described above, the present invention provides methods for transferring a
25 useful layer of a monocrystalline material from a first support to a second support, a support and a substrate, for use in fabricating substrates or components on substrates for microelectronics, optoelectronics, or optics. The method includes forming a first substrate comprising the first support and at least a portion of the useful layer with an interface between the first support and the useful layer. A treatment involving the
30 useful layer results in the formation of a peripheral zone of material that may at least partially laterally cover the interface. In an advantageous implementation, the material is removed, thus enabling a detachment means to be used on the interface. A free face of the useful layer is then affixed to a second support, and the useful layer is detached at the interface between the first support and the useful layer. Other
35 advantageous methods are also described herein for effectively transferring a useful layer from a first support to a second support.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other aspects, purposes and advantages of the invention will become clear after reading the following description with reference to the attached drawings, in
5 which:

Figure 1 is a cross sectional view of a first substrate comprising a first support and a useful layer;

10 Figure 2 is a cross sectional view of a second support affixed to a first substrate in order to transfer the useful layer thereto;

Figures 3a and 3b are cross sectional views illustrating removal of residual material according to this invention;

15 Figure 4 is a cross sectional view of the first substrate illustrating a particular arrangement of a first support according to the invention; and

Figures 5 and 6 are cross sectional and enlarged plan views respectively, of a particular arrangement of the useful layer for gaining access to the interface between it
20 and the first support according to the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Figures 1 and 2 show a first support 10 that may be formed from a
25 semiconductor material, for example silicon carbide SiC, mono- or polycrystalline silicon, etc, or may be formed from an insulating material, for example sapphire. A layer 12 is formed or deposited on the first support and forms a releasable bonding interface. The layer 12 may be a layer of semiconducting or semiconductive oxide such as SiO₂, semiconductor nitride, or the like. The layer 12 forms a releasable
30 bonding interface between the first support 10 and a useful layer. In this case, the useful layer includes a base layer 14 on which a layer 16 has been formed or deposited. Typically, the base layer 14 is a seed layer on which the layer 16 is formed by epitaxy. The seed layer may be formed of silicon carbide, sapphire, gallium nitride, silicon, or aluminum nitride, for example. In one embodiment, the base layer
35 14 is formed of SiC while the epitaxially grown layer is formed of a metal nitride such

as gallium nitride GaN, or formed by a stack of different metal nitrides. Such a useful layer structure can advantageously be used to fabricate light-emitting diodes (LEDs).

In a variation, the releasable bonding interface 12 between the first support 10 and the useful layer may not be a layer as such. Instead, the useful layer may be weakly bonded to the support 10 at the interface therebetween.

As shown in Figure 1, the first support 10 is slightly larger than the assembly of layers 12, 14 and 16 formed on the support. The layer 16 may be grown by epitaxy carried out in a "full wafer" reactor. Thus, the growth extends not only above the seed layer 14, but also around a peripheral ring 161 which covers the ledge or periphery of the support 10.

Figure 2 illustrates affixing the assembly shown in Figure 1, termed the first substrate, to a second support 20. In this case, a metal bonding technique is used and the bonding layer is illustrated at 22. The useful layer 14, 16 is transferred from the first support 10 to the second support 20 after fixing or bonding as described above. A detachment tool may be used to apply a stress or force to the interface layer 12 between the useful layer 14, 16 and the first support 10, to detach the useful layer by urging detachment in the plane of the interface.

However, Figure 2 shows that the deposited GaN peripheral ring 161 causes two problems. First, it reinforces the bond between the useful layer 14, 16 and the first support at the periphery of the first substrate. Second, it hinders direct access to the bonding interface 12 by a detachment tool (such as a thin blade, a jet of fluid, etc.), and makes it impossible to directly apply the required detachment force or stress thereto (see arrow F1 in Figure 3a).

Several solutions for solving these problems are described below.

A first solution to this problem is shown in Figure 3a. In this implementation, the peripheral ring 161 is removed. In a first embodiment, removal can be achieved by etching. Thus, a mask may be used on the free face of the useful layer 14, 16, to permit access only to the ring 161. An attack medium suitable for removing the ring material is then used to attack and remove the ring over its entire thickness, and thus to permit access to the detachable interface layer 12. In the present example, because the ring is made of GaN, the following is preferably used: plasma etching or RIE (reactive ion etching) based on SiCl_4 , BCl_3 (for further information, reference can be made to the article "GaN: Processing, Defects and Devices", S.J. Pearton et al, Journal of Applied Physics, vol. 86, no 1, 1st July 1999). Other etching techniques such as plasma etching can be used.

In a second embodiment, the ring is removed using a splitting or trimming technique. A mechanical saw, a laser or an ion beam could be used to split off or trim

the peripheral ring 161 from the support 10. The ring may be removed by using a cylindrical cut and a cut in a transitional plane between the ring 161 and the first support 10. In all cases, care is taken that an attack or a splitting method provides satisfactory access to the detachable interface layer 12 to allow transfer of the useful layer. It should be noted that merely partially removing the ring 161 may be sufficient to attenuate the peripheral bond between the first support 10 and the useful layer 14, 16, and may be enough to allow proper use of a detachment tool. Alternately, it is possible to remove the ring 161 while also penetrating into the support itself.

Figure 3b illustrates another variation wherein splitting is carried out through the entire thickness of the first substrate so that not only the interfering ring 161 is removed, but also removed is an adjacent portion 101 of the first support 10. This method may be suitable when it is difficult to control the working depth of the splitting technique. It is preferable to remove the ring 161 before the second support 20 is affixed to the useful layer 14, 16. However, in some cases it may be possible to remove the peripheral ring after the second support 20 has been bonded to the substrate.

Figure 4 illustrates yet another approach for overcoming the problem caused by the peripheral deposit 161. In this case, a first support 10 is specifically prepared to include a peripheral recess 102. The peripheral recess advantageously extends in a radial direction (horizontally in Figure 4) between the outer edge of the support 10 and the outer edges of the interface layer 12 and useful layer 14, 16. In the axial direction (vertically in Figure 4), the recess 102 preferably extends to a depth (d) that is at least equal to the thickness of the residual material 161 deposited on the first support 10, so that at the end of the deposition operation, the peripheral ring 161 does not obstruct and/or does not bond to the detachable interface. Thus, in this case, the ring 161 does not have to be removed. The recess is preferably produced before forming the layers 12 and 14, and in any case before forming all or a portion of the useful layer which may cover the periphery of the first substrate. Preferably, the recess is formed by removing a portion of the first support with a laser beam or by mechanical trimming.

A further approach is shown in Figures 5 and 6. In this variation, cuts or channels 18 are formed in the thickness of the useful layer 14, 16, to a depth equal to that of the interface layer 12. These cuts define individual islets or tiles 19. The islets may be square in shape, as shown in Figure 6, with a size that is preferably in the range of from 1×1 square micrometer (μm^2) to $300 \times 300 \mu\text{m}^2$. The cuts can be formed either mechanically, for example by using a saw splitting technique, or by using a laser splitting or ion beam splitting technique. The cuts can also be chemically etched by first placing an etching mask on the free surface of the useful

layer 14,16 that allows for a selective geometric attack. Preferably, and in particular to prevent the attack from excavating the walls of the channels too much, a dry or wet etching technique is used. When the useful layer is formed from a seed layer of SiC 14 on which GaN epitaxy is used, argon based ion etching may be used (for further
5 information, see the article "GaN: Processing, Defects and Devices", cited above).

Such an approach avoids reinforcement of the interface between the useful layer and the first support caused by the presence of the peripheral ring 161. In particular, after producing the assembly shown in Figure 1 channels are formed so that each individualized tile, which is not itself subjected to the reinforcement due to the
10 ring 161, can be detached by force from the support. It should be noted that the force can be a tension, bending or shear stress, or a variety of combinations of such forces.

Clearly, the present invention can be applied to a very wide variety of semiconductor materials. In addition to the example of a layer of nitride developed on silicon carbide on insulator (SiCOI) as described above, the invention can be
15 employed, for example, when transferring a useful silicon layer in which certain methods for fabricating components using CMOS technology on a second insulating support 10 have been carried out. Many other applications are also possible. The skilled person will be able to readily select solutions that are suitable (i.e. choose one of the three approaches described, choose the method of material removal, etc.) as a
20 function of the materials used. In addition, the three approaches of the invention described above can be combined together.